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THE ONLY

Howard Sought on Spy Charge

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JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

SANTA FE — The FBI issued a national bulletin late Wednesday confirming that Edward L. Howard, who left his job with the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee and disappeared more than a week ago, is a former CIA agent wanted on a federal espionage charge.

The FBI, which said Howard was employed by the CIA from January 1981 to June 1983, said he was charged on Sept. 23 with "conspiracy to deliver national defense information to assist a foreign government."

The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Associated Press quoted Washington sources as saying Howard may have been named as a double-agent by a top-level Soviet KGB agent, Vitaly Yurchenko, who defected in August while on a temporary assignment in Rome. He reportedly is being debriefed under tight security near Washington.

The FBI search for Howard, which it first acknowledged more than a week after filing charges against him, was the first public sign of fallout from Yurchenko's jump to the West.

The Post, attributing its information to informed sources, said the FBI also has identified a second CIA officer, apparently named by Yurchenko.

The Post said it was told Wednesday that the second former CIA officer has not fled the United States, but its source would not comment on whether efforts are being made to place

the man under surveillance or arrest.

A congressional source also suggested that a separate international search may be under way for several other former CIA operatives possibly identified as Soviet agents by Yurchenko.

The Los Angeles Times quoted officials as saying Howard wasn't suspected of supplying secrets until after he left the CIA.

A spokesman for the Senate Intelligence Committee, which was briefed on the Howard case in Washington, D.C., Thursday, said the panel had been advised last week that the FBI was conducting a "covert investigation" of Howard.

In a resignation letter addressed to his LFC supervisor, Phil Baca, Howard said he hoped "some day to be able to explain this to you and the rest of the staff." Baca found the letter the night of Sept. 22, a Sunday, when he came into the office to prepare for a meeting.

At the time, FBI agents had begun questioning Howard's acquaintances.

Howard, 33, also is wanted on a New Mexico charge of violating probation, which stemmed from a guilty plea in February 1984 to a charge of aggravated battery.

According to Santa Fe District Attorney Chet Walter, federal officials said Howard took a flight from Albuquerque to Dallas and then Austin, Texas, about Sept. 22.

On Wednesday, FBI agents in parked cars kept close watch on the Howard house in the Eldorado subdivision southeast of Santa Fe, while another waited for Howard's wife, Mary, to leave her job at a dentist's office on Santa Fe's eastside.

FBI officials searched Howard's house — last weekend, according to neighbors — in an effort to find sophisticated espionage equipment and records. What, if anything, was found in or around the house remains a mystery.

But a search warrant left in a Jeep parked on the premises following the search sought evidence of a "conspiracy to transmit, deliver and communicate documents and information relating to the national defense to a foreign government ..."

While the federal charges were not related to Howard's state job, according to LFC officials, his work did give him opportunities to travel throughout the state. Howard's responsibilities on the staff included estimating state revenues and overseeing state trust fund investments.

No one answered the doorbell or the telephone at the Howard home Wednesday. A reporter who vis-

ited heard the voices of a child and an adult inside, and a neighbor who declined to be identified said the Howards' 2-year-old son, Lee, was being cared for by his maternal grandmother while Howard's wife was at work.

Mrs. Howard apparently returned to Santa Fe late Tuesday after visiting her parents in Minneapolis. Through a co-worker at the office of Santa Fe orthodontist George Abrams, Mrs. Howard said she didn't want to talk to a reporter and wouldn't come out from the back of the office.

She waited to leave the dentist's office until about 6:45 p.m., when she walked quickly with a co-worker to the Jeep and drove off. A tan van driven by a single FBI agent, which had been parked up the street for several hours, drove off behind Mrs. Howard.

A phone call to the Garland, Texas, home of Howard's parents, brought a cryptic tape-recorded message: "Hello, this is the Howards' residence. We are all fine." The male voice asked callers to leave a name and telephone number.

The February 1984 incident which led to Howard's New Mexico conviction was described Wednesday by state District Judge Bruce Kaufman of Santa Fe as "one of those crazy drunken confrontations."

Howard initially was charged with assault with a deadly weapon on three men, but the charges were reduced to aggravated battery in the plea bargain. Kaufman placed Howard on probation, citing extenuating circumstances, glowing letters of recommendation from state and federal officials and the fact Howard had no previous record.

Howard told the court he had a fight with his wife and went out drinking, the judge recalled. A letter in the court file from Howard's lawyer, Morton Simon of Santa Fe, said Howard had been drinking heavily and "was quite distraught" following a fight at home.

A summary in the court file says the three victims claimed Howard followed them as they drove away from the Town House, a motel, bar and restaurant on a highway southeast of Santa Fe. They claimed Howard attempted to block their way with his red Jeep and that after they pulled over on a street in Santa Fe, he got out and pointed a .44-caliber revolver at the driver, Peter Hughes. The pistol discharged during the scuffle, blowing a hole in the roof of Hughes' vehicle.

Howard had a different version of events. He claimed in court that the three men had started an argument with him in The Town House parking lot and began kicking both him and his vehicle. When he ran into them again later that night, he had the pistol with him in self defense because he had noticed a pipe or stick in their car earlier, the summary of his

testimony said. He said that during a struggle over control of the gun it discharged.

Court records indicate that when Howard was later stopped by police he had blood on his face and clothing and told them he followed the three home from the bar because they had promised him a girl and a good time. He spent one day in jail before being released on a \$25,000 property bond.

Howard was treated at St. Vincent Hospital for cuts and lacerations. Hughes suffered no injuries other than a cut on his finger.

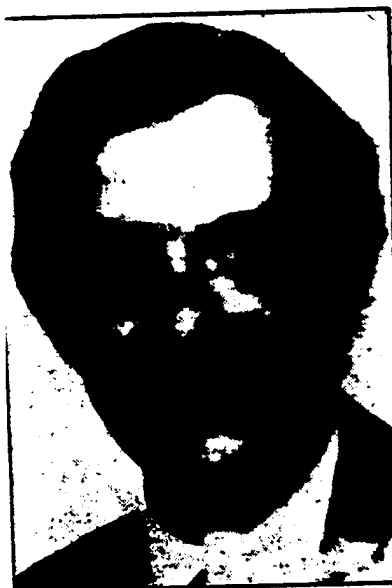
Kaufman said letters of recommendation from state and federal officials — introduced as exhibits during Howard's sentencing hearing — played a role in his decision.

Katherine Peterson and James Morton wrote on State Department stationery that Howard was of "outstanding character."

Carl Leonard, an AID official, said he supervised Howard's work in Peru and that he was a "hard working and effective representative of the U.S."

New Mexico State Rep. Felix Nunez wrote a letter describing Howard as "a dedicated and honest person of integrity." Former State Sen. Frank Papen, then chairman of the LFC, called him a "dedicated, honest, and truthful individual."

Said Kaufman, "He had better recommendations than 98 percent of the people you'll ever see."



Edward L. Howard
Missing since flight to Dallas